

Response from Chris Dore, Editor-in-Chief, The Australian:

Your show couldn't possibly believe that publishing a story about how bots had infiltrated the Rudd petition, which is also littered with other fake names, amounts to a smear of Kevin Rudd. Nor could you possibly categorise as a smear the publication of a story about how Mr Rudd and his busy lawyers are currently negotiating with the federal Attorney General's department about his status in relation to the foreign interference laws. Could you? Or that Mr Rudd had connections to Jeffrey Epstein, a story first published by Nine's sites and that appeared on the front page of The Sydney Morning Herald?

In a Trump-like craze, Mr Rudd has published dozens of manic tweets and videos over the past few weeks, almost exclusively seeking to smear journalists at The Australian and other News Corp titles, labelling hard-working, respected professionals among other things slime, liars, thugs, mafia and henchmen.

He has done countless interviews, many on the ABC, where his increasingly bizarre assertions and loose connections with the truth have gone completely unchallenged. He has given no explanation at all, nor has he been asked, what has sparked his sudden obsession, nor has he been asked to explain why at a time when quite literally the Australian media landscape has never been more diverse, why he would be quite so agitated right now.

The Australian has not engaged with him on this or sought to react to his behaviour, which is something else for a person who has held the highest office in the nation, albeit briefly and some would say, unsuccessfully.

While a complicit ABC has been happy to accommodate Mr Rudd in his lurid campaign it is worth noting that the national broadcaster has consistently failed to highlight to its audience that the Rudd petition also calls for an increase in funding for the ABC. Why is that?

It's also worth noting that as prime minister Malcolm Turnbull, Mr Rudd's new collaborator, relaxed the media laws in this country, to allow, for example, Nine to buy Fairfax newspapers and Macquarie Radio, yet the ABC has also failed to point this out, most notably on 730 last week.

Intriguingly, in all of these breathless reports, the ABC, which has so enthusiastically endorsed a royal commission, has also failed to point out that with more media owners in Australia than any time in history it is in fact the ABC itself, in all its taxpayer-funded glory, that has become the biggest, most dominant digital publisher and broadcaster in the country.

Millions of Australians recognise the positive contribution our company makes to this country, employing thousands of people, and helping communities all over Australia.

It's been 10 years now since his own party dumped him and 7 years since he lost office. Covid has been tough on everyone. And while not many Australians can sit in a

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multi-million dollar beachside mansion or luxury digs on the Brisbane River through this tough time Australians no doubt hope Mr Rudd has the support he needs and can one day find solace.

The Australian has no desire to smear Mr Rudd. He's doing a great job as it is without our help.